

Boating Checklist

By Jefferey Rondman

- Before Departing**
 - Fuel** This is obvious, but make sure you have enough to get where you're going.
 - Personal Flotation Devices** Also called safety jackets by some, these are a must before going anywhere.
 - Fire Extinguishers.** The reason for this should be obvious, but be sure that they stay in working order!
 - Tools** Make sure that tools that would be used to fix problems on board are on the boat, and some spare ones as well.
 - Battery** Be sure that the battery is fully charged, cleaned and not corroded. Replace if needed.
 - Distress Signals.** Do your distress signals (horns, lights, flares, etc) work properly? If not, fix or replace them!
 - Forecast** Squalls can do damage to boats, so pay attention to the forecast.
- Equipment**
 - Anchors** This is common sense, though some people don't think about it; check for weak or broken links, and replace if needed.
 - Masts** Sailboats need to be checked over thoroughly for cracks in the masts after bad storms, especially if the boat has tipped over.
 - Sails** Check for rips or tears; quite often they can be patched, but sometimes the sail has to be replaced.
 - Oars** Rowboats that do use these need to make sure that the oars don't have splits in them, and are still in usable shape.
 - Spare Batteries** Always have at least one, preferable two spare batteries, and a charger on board, just in case.
 - Leaks** Check for leaks in all systems of the boat. Replace necessary lines where needed.
 - Grab rails** Ensure that the rails are tight in the deck, and have not come loose.
 - Non-skid surfaces** Make sure that the non-skid surfaces are just that; there should not slippery spots that need to be fixed or replaced.
- What to Pack**
 - Food** At the very least, have a day's worth of food with you on the boat at all times.
 - Water** Bottled water is a necessity as well; salt water will dehydrate you. Take a day's worth.
 - Communication** Radios and cell phones are the best way to keep in contact with the mainland, especially if a storm hits.
 - First Aid Kit** Make sure that this is fully stocked with everything, and keep the items in it fresh. Extra gauze and pressure bandages would be great.
 - Lights** Flashlights for getting around in the dark onboard if the power goes out.

- Sunscreen** This is a given, unless you want to look like a lobster and turn bright red.
- Identification** Because you'll be on the water, put your identification in waterproof envelope or something similar, along with a health card.
- Directions** Your itinerary should be listed with the local authorities, and you should at the very minimum have a nautical map.
- Tips for Safety**
 - Maintenance** Always maintain your boat, and follow your different checklists to a tee.
 - Itinerary** Turn one in with the local authorities so that if something happens, they know where to start looking.
 - Practice drills** Use these to make sure you know how to safely deal with emergencies on your boat when needed.
 - Awareness** Always stay aware of what's going on around you; the weather can change, something can break instantly, so pay attention.